



WHAT'S BEHIND THE FORM?

TAKE YOUR OWN CENSUS AND FIND OUT

Grades 6-12

Skills and Objectives:

Grades 6-9:

- Students will understand the stages of designing, conducting, and processing a survey.
- Students will determine mean, median, and range for sets of data.
- Students will create a bar graph based on the results of their own survey.

Grades 10-12:

- Students will understand how a population estimate differs from a population projection.

Suggested Groupings:

Individuals

Materials Needed:

Notebook paper

Getting Started

1. Every 10 years the U.S.

Census Bureau conducts a census (a complete count) of the population of the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Explain to students that the census is an actual count as opposed to a

survey, which is based on a sample of respondents. Along with the population count, other facts are collected, such as social, economic, and housing characteristics. Various statistical measures, including mean, median, and range, are used to communicate the information in a meaningful way to government agencies, businesses, universities, and the public. Information such as the age distribution of a population is crucial because it impacts programs and spending. For example, if the percentage of the Virgin Islands' residents ages 65 and over increases between 1990 and 2000, this might affect the allocation of funds to programs for the elderly. For more information, refer to "Our Changing Islands" (page 7). The next census will be conducted on April 1, 2000.

Chalkboard Definitions

addend: any number that is added to another to form a sum.

population estimate: a conclusion about the past or present population based on existing data.

mean: the average of a set of numbers.

median: the middle number, or the average of the two middle numbers, in a set of numbers.

percent: the ratio of a number to 100. Like a fraction, a percent signifies a part of a whole.

population projection: computation of future population size based on assumptions about births, deaths, and migration.

range: the difference between the largest number and the smallest number in a set of numbers.

respondent: a person included in a survey or a census.

survey: a set of questions asked of a specific group of people to collect data.



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2. Explain to students that the census is an enormous undertaking requiring about 12 years of planning and preparation. In order for the Census Bureau to collect the correct information, the right questions must be asked.

3. Explain to your students that they will be conducting their own “census-like” surveys. To do this, they will be collecting information from five households — their own, as well as those of relatives or friends — and comparing that information with data that were collected in the Virgin Islands during the 1990 census.

Using the Activity Worksheets:

Photocopy and distribute Activity Worksheet 7A (page 26). Ask students to look over the 1990 census results to familiarize themselves with the outcomes they may expect after conducting their surveys.

- Next, photocopy and distribute “Think It Through Before You Start” (page 25) and discuss the questions with your students. Have students respond to the questions in the spaces provided, and as a class review their answers.
- On a sheet of paper, have students write down the following questions, making sure to leave room for five sets of answers.
 1. How many people live in your household?
 2. What are their ages?
- Now students are ready to conduct their surveys. Discuss how they will gather and record data from the five households. Remind them to apply what they learned from “Think It Through Before You Start.”
- After students have finished their surveys, have them transfer the age data they’ve collected onto a

separate sheet of paper, arranging the ages from youngest to oldest.

- Review with your students the steps for calculating mean, median, percentage, and range on Activity Worksheet 7A (page 26). Then have students use the data they collected from their survey to answer the questions on that page.

Wrapping Up:

1. Compare students’ answers to the figures shown for the U.S. Virgin Islands on the Activity Worksheet. Responses will vary, but students should be able to explain their work.

- Revisit “Think It Through Before You Start” (page 25) with your students and ask them to reconsider each of the questions in light of their recent survey experience. **What obstacles did they encounter? Did they obtain the results they expected? If they were asked to conduct another survey, would they do anything differently?** Explain that the Census Bureau also faces many difficulties during the taking of a census such as determining which questions to ask, tracking down hard-to-reach respondents, ensuring the accuracy of an enormous amount of information, and deciding how to present the data collected to a wide range of audiences. The Bureau must also contend with people who won’t fill out the form because they fear their answers won’t be kept confidential. **From what you’ve learned, how would you suggest that the Census Bureau deal with these issues?**

- Ask students whether they think the results of the 2000 census will differ from those of 1990. If so, why?

2. Photocopy and distribute the Census 2000 ques-



Think It Through Before You Start

To conduct a successful survey you need to be well-organized and prepared to handle obstacles you'll find along your way. Answer the following questions before embarking on your research.

1. Who will you collect the information from?

The information you collect for each household may vary depending on which person you interview. For example, a young child may not know the exact ages of all the household members, whereas an adult in the household probably will.

2. When will you collect the information?

You may be more likely to reach a respondent during evening hours. During daytime hours, many respondents will be unavailable because they are at work or in school.

3. How will you collect the information?

Via telephone, face-to-face interview, or mail questionnaire? A phone survey is generally economical and efficient, but remember that some households don't have phone service. In-person interviews are the most time-consuming because they require visiting the household being surveyed. With a mail questionnaire, you'll need a printed form that respondents can fill out and return, but be aware that postage and printing costs can add up quickly.

4. How will you deal with a respondent who refuses to participate?

People who refuse to take part in a survey often do so because they fear the information they provide will be shared with others. Assuring confidentiality increases the likelihood that those you survey will answer your questions. The Census Bureau, for example, does not share the information it collects with any other government agencies, and its employees take a sworn oath to keep the information they collect confidential. In addition, all census data are aggregated — no characteristics of individuals are ever revealed.

5. How will you check the accuracy of the data you collect?

Keep an eye out for suspicious numbers such as a household with 50 members or an individual who is 200 years old. If you see these kinds of aberrations, the best thing to do is resurvey the household in question to correct any errors.

6. How will you present your data once your survey is complete?

Possibilities include creating charts, tables, graphs, or preparing a written or oral report.



Lesson 7

Activity Worksheet 7A

Use the data collected from your own survey to solve the following problems:

Solution to the Problem

1990 Census Results

How to Solve the Problem

Problem to Solve

<p>Find the Mean Number of Persons Per Household from Your Survey</p>	<p>The mean is the average of all the numbers in a set of numbers. Write down how many people live in each household you surveyed. Add the numbers, then divide by the number of addends.</p>	<p>1990 Mean Number of Persons Per Household in the U.S. Virgin Islands <u>3.14</u></p>	<p>Write Your Answer Here</p>																								
<p>Find the Median Age of the Respondents from Your Survey</p>	<p>The median is the middle number (or the average of the two middle numbers) in a set of numbers. Write down the age data you've collected from youngest to oldest. Find the median by crossing out numbers, one from each end, until only one number is left. If two numbers are left, find the mean of the two.</p>	<p>1990 Median Age of Residents of the U.S. Virgin Islands <u>28.2</u></p>	<p>Write Your Answer Here</p>																								
<p>Find the Age Range of the Respondents from Your Survey</p>	<p>The range is the difference between the largest number and the smallest number in a set of numbers. As above, arrange the age data you've collected in order from youngest to oldest. Subtract the youngest from the oldest to find the age range of your population.</p>	<p>1990 Age Range of Residents of the U.S. Virgin Islands <u>105</u></p>	<p>Write Your Answer Here</p>																								
<p>Find the Percent Distribution of Population by Age from Your Survey</p>	<p>Sort the age data you've collected according to the following age categories: 0-17, 18-24, 25-44, 45-64, and 65+. Divide the number of individuals that falls into each age category by the total number of respondents. Multiply by 100. This will tell you what percentage of respondents falls into a particular age category. Using the graph at right as a model, plot the percentages for the data you've collected in the last column.</p>	<p>1990 Percent Distribution of Population by Age for the U.S. Virgin Islands</p> <table border="1"> <caption>1990 Percent Distribution of Population by Age for the U.S. Virgin Islands</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Age</th> <th>Percent</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>65+</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>45-64</td> <td>15</td> </tr> <tr> <td>25-44</td> <td>25</td> </tr> <tr> <td>18-24</td> <td>10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>0-17</td> <td>45</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Age	Percent	65+	5	45-64	15	25-44	25	18-24	10	0-17	45	<table border="1"> <caption>Blank Bar Graph for 1990 Percent Distribution of Population by Age for the U.S. Virgin Islands</caption> <thead> <tr> <th>Age</th> <th>Percent</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>65+</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>45-64</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>25-44</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>18-24</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>0-17</td> <td>0</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Age	Percent	65+	0	45-64	0	25-44	0	18-24	0	0-17	0
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Name: _____

Population Estimates/Projections

Grades 10-12

● Enumerations, Estimates, and Projections of Population

The U.S. Census Bureau produces three basic types of information about the U.S. population: enumerations, estimates, and projections. Enumerations are counts of the population, as in the 1990 census of population. Estimates are calculations of the population for a recent date and are usually based on the last census as well as on information about population change since the last census. Projections are calculations of the population for a future date and are usually based on the last census or estimate, and on assumptions about future population growth or decline.

● Population Estimates

The three components of population change between two dates are births, deaths, and net migration (immigration to the U.S. Virgin Islands minus emigration from the U.S. Virgin Islands).

For the Virgin Islands, the population in 1990 was 101,809. For the 1990–1998 period, data on the components of population show the following:

births (B) = 19,062, deaths (D) = 4,720, net migration (NM) = +2,231.

1. Calculate the 1998 population estimate for the Virgin Islands using the following formula:

$$P_{1998} = P_{1990} + B - D + NM$$

● Population Projections

The three components of population change between two dates are births, deaths, and net migration. To make population projections for the Virgin Islands, demographers make assumptions about future trends in the components of population change.

2. Table A shows the 1970 and 1990 census populations for the Virgin Islands. Calculate numerical change (1990 population minus 1970 population) and percent change (population change as a percent of 1970 population, with percent change rounded to one decimal place).

Table A. Population Change of the U.S. Virgin Islands: 1970 and 1990

1970 Population	1990 Population	Numerical change	Percent change
62,468	101,809		

3. Calculate population projections for the U.S. Virgin Islands for the year 2010 assuming a continuation of trends for the 1970–1990 period: first based on numerical change, then based on percent change (as calculated above), with the results rounded to the nearest integer.

Table B. Population Projections for the Virgin Islands for 2010

Based on numerical change	Based on percent change

4. Why is the population projection for the year 2010 larger when based on percent change than when based on numerical change for the 1970–1990 period?
